

# **The Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the Apostles' Sermons in the Book of Acts**

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The Apostles' evangelistic sermons recorded in the Book of Acts are rich with quotations and allusions to the Old Testament (OT). The evangelists use these citations to support their claim that Jesus is the promised Messiah. Peter's sermons in Acts 2, 3 and 4 provide valuable insights into the Apostles' methods of interpreting the OT and show how early Christian Christology was rooted in the Scriptures.

Some modern critics accuse the Apostles of reading things into the biblical passages that they cite.<sup>1</sup> Yet in order for these evangelistic messages to be persuasive, the original Jewish audience must have understood the Apostles' interpretations to be consistent with the meaning of the biblical passages in their original context. Luke reports the great effectiveness of Peter's evangelistic messages. When the Jewish crowds heard Peter's Pentecost sermon, which used numerous biblical quotations, they were "pierced to the heart" (κατενύγησαν τὴν καρδίαν, Acts 2:37) and 3000 people believed his message (Acts 2:41). Similarly as a result of Peter's sermon in Acts 3:12-24, thousands more believed in Jesus (4:4).

The majority of the OT citations in Acts appear in evangelistic speeches, primarily in Acts 2, 3, 4, 7, and 13.<sup>2</sup> All biblical citations in evangelistic messages are used with audiences primarily composed of Jews or Gentile proselytes.<sup>3</sup> Most of these quotations show that the time of fulfillment has come and Jesus is the promised Messiah. Since the Jewish people were looking for the Messiah, the Apostles defended the identity and mission of Jesus with these biblical citations. This paper examines Acts 2, 3 and 4 to learn the methods used by Peter to interpret messianic OT Scriptures and to see how they function in his evangelistic sermons.

## **Acts 2:22-36: Peter's Pentecost Sermon**

On Pentecost thousands of Jews from many nations witnessed the miracle of Jesus' disciples speaking in tongues. Peter used this opportunity to preach an evangelistic sermon of which nearly two thirds is devoted to Christology. Verses 14-21 explain that the miracle of speaking in tongues shows that the last days have arrived and the prophecy of Joel 2:18-22 has begun to be fulfilled. The remainder of the sermon (vv. 22-36) discusses the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ and supports these concepts with scriptural citations.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 1-5, 74; C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures. The Substructure of New Testament Theology* (London: Nisbet, 1952), 130.

<sup>2</sup> Although Peter's speech in Acts 4 and Stephen's speech in Acts 7 were both given to the Sanhedrin, they function as evangelistic messages, rather than merely personal defenses in a trial. The citation of Isa. 53:7-8 in Acts 8:32-33 is also in an evangelistic context, although Luke did not record the words that Philip used in his explanation of the passage to the Ethiopian eunuch.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 17:2-3 says that it was Paul's custom to speak in the Synagogues on the Sabbath and show from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ (cf. 18:28, Apollos).

## Acts 2:25-28: The Resurrection of David's Descendant

Peter begins the Christological part of his sermon by arguing that Jesus' identity was accredited by God through his miracles (v. 22). Although the Jews collaborated with the Romans ("wicked men"<sup>4</sup>, v. 23) to put him to death on a cross, His death was according to "the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God" (v. 23). Men put Jesus to death, "but God raised Him up again" (v. 24).

Peter devotes vv. 24-32 to scriptural proof that it was God's plan that his Messiah would rise from the dead. In vv. 25-28, he quotes Ps. 16[15]:8-11 and then he exegetes this text in vv. 29-32.<sup>5</sup> The introductory formula to the quotation of Ps 16 is, "for David says of him" (Δαυὶδ γὰρ λέγει εἰς αὐτόν, v. 25). The connective γὰρ shows that the Scripture he quotes provides support for his claim that "it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him" (v. 24). Most of Peter's discussion focuses on Ps. 16:10: "You will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor allow Your Holy One to undergo decay."

Peter notes that the psalm was written by David (v. 25, cf. v. 29), probably based on the ascription to David at the start of the psalm in the Hebrew Bible (דָּוִד מְכַתֵּם) and LXX (στηλογραφία τῷ Δαυιδ).<sup>6</sup> Even though the quotation says the Lord would not abandon him to the grave, Peter observes that in fact David did die and he stayed in the grave: "I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day" (v. 29).

To solve this dilemma, Peter alludes to another Scripture: David "knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne" (v. 30). This is a paraphrase of Ps. 132[131]:11: "The Lord has sworn to David a truth from which He will not turn back: 'Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne.'" This psalm alludes to the oath recorded in 2 Sam. 7:11-16, where God made a covenant with David, promising that his descendants would rule on his throne forever ("throne" is used in 2 Sam. 7:13 and 16). This promise has an immediate reference to David's son, Solomon.<sup>7</sup> However, in many ways the promise is too big to be completely fulfilled by Solomon, since it says that the kingdom would last forever (vv. 13, 16). None of the kings of Israel fulfilled this idealized conception. Thus the concept developed in Jewish interpretation that the Messiah would be the greater descendant of David and completely fulfill the idealized description of the Davidic king. Through the Semitic concept of corporate solidarity, in which an individual is seen as part of or as a representative of a group of people,<sup>8</sup> the Messiah sums up all that the perfect Davidic king was to be. A promise to David,

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted, Biblical quotations are from the New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update. LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Peter refers to several specific words found in the quotation: "tomb" (v. 29, cf. "grave" v. 27), "David," taken from the title of the psalm (v. 25, 29), "not abandon me to the grave" (v. 31) and "not see decay" (v. 31).

<sup>6</sup> Both the MT and LXX indicate that the psalm was written by David or associated with David. However, the meaning of both מְכַתֵּם and στηλογραφία is uncertain. Some conjectures include an inscription on a stone slab (Mitchell Dahood, , *Psalms I: 1-50*, The Anchor Bible Commentary (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 87) or a psalm of atonement (W. Mowinkel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (Blackwell, 1962), 2:209). See a summary of major views in Peter C. Craigie, , *Psalms I-50*, Word Biblical Commentary, no. 19 (Word: Dallas, 2002), 154.

<sup>7</sup> Parts of the covenant particularly apply to Solomon, such as that he would build the temple (v. 13) and that God would punish him when he does wrong (v. 14b).

<sup>8</sup> Corporate solidarity "is an attempt to convey the idea that the individuals among God's people are not merely individuals; they are part of a larger whole. Consequently what is said about the individual can apply to the whole

therefore, also applies to his descendants, particularly his greater descendant, the Messiah. 2 Sam. 7:11-16 is the most fundamental prophecy about the Davidic Messiah and serves as the basis for many other messianic texts, including Psalms 2, 16, 45, 89, 110 and 132.

By the New Testament (NT) era, 2 Sam. 7:11-16 was interpreted messianically in some Jewish circles. For example, at Qumran (4QFlor 1:10-12) the "son" is identified as "the branch of David who will arise . . . in Zion in the Last Days". Various Second Temple Jewish writings (e.g. Pss. Sol. 17-18),<sup>9</sup> along with Jn. 7:42 and Mark 12:35 show that there was a popular expectation among many Jews that the Messiah would be descended from David.

With the insights of 2 Sam. 7:11-16 in mind, Peter returns to his exegesis of Psalm 16. David spoke as a prophet (Acts 2:30)<sup>10</sup> concerning the resurrection "of the Christ" (v. 31), where τοῦ Χριστοῦ means "the Messiah." Where the psalm refers to a future event, Peter substitutes the aorist tense in v. 31, to indicate that the prediction has been fulfilled: "He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay". Peter uses Scripture to interpret Scripture – insights from 2 Samuel 7 illuminate the meaning of Psalm 16. This leads to a typological understanding of Ps. 16:10: Although the psalm is about David, the promise was not completely fulfilled in David's experience and thus it must be fulfilled to the fullest extent by David's greater descendent.<sup>11</sup>

Verse 32 explains the distinctively Christian conclusion: "This Jesus God raised up."<sup>12</sup> The fact that God raised Jesus from the dead, "to which we are all witnesses" (v. 32), confirms that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the greater Son of David. This returns to the point with which Peter began his Christological discussion: God accredited (ἀποδεδειγμένον) Jesus – i.e. he demonstrated that he was the Christ<sup>13</sup> – by "miracles, wonder and signs" (v. 22), including the supreme miracle that "God raised him from the dead" (v. 24). God promised that the greater descendent of David would not be abandoned in the grave so that his body would decay, and in fact this promise was fulfilled in Jesus. Peter's witness to Jesus consists of a combination of the exposition of Scripture and testifying to having seen the resurrected Jesus. This proved to be an effective apologetic to his Jewish audience, since thousands repented and were baptized in the name of Jesus (vv. 37, 41).

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and vice versa." (Klyne R. Snodgrass, "Quotations of the Old Testament in the New Testament," in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), 1811)

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the evidence in Testaments of Twelve Patriarchs, cf. D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic. 200 BC - AD 100* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 316-19.

<sup>10</sup> 2 Sam. 23:1-2 shows that David considered himself a prophet, including in his writing the Psalms. David was also considered a prophet at Qumran (11QPs<sup>a</sup> 27:2-11) and by Josephus (Ant. 6.8.2; cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "David, 'Being Therefore a Prophet...' (Acts 2:30)," *CBQ* 34 (1972): 332-39). Jacob Jervell, "The Center of Scripture," in *The Unknown Paul: Essays on Luke-Acts and Early Christian History* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1984), 126, probably goes to far, when he claims that for Luke, "David, father of the Messiah, is the prophet par excellence, the central figure of Scripture."

<sup>11</sup> However, see Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Promise to David in Psalm 16," in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 219-29, who argues that Ps. 16:11 is direct predictive prophecy.

<sup>12</sup> There is no evidence of a pre-Christian Jewish Messianic interpretation of Psalm 16. Midr. Ps. 16:9-10, however, says that David rejoiced in the Lord Messiah who would rise up out of him, although it understands v. 10 to mean that "in the grave his [David's] flesh will not dissolve like the dust." See Leon Nemoy, Saul Lieberman and Henry A. Wolfson, eds., *The Midrash on the Psalms*, trans. William G. Braude (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 201-02.

<sup>13</sup> BDAG, "ἀποδεικνυμι," meaning 3.

## Acts 2:34: David's Lord is Seated at God's Right Hand

Although Jesus has been resurrected, he is no longer on earth in bodily form. Peter next describes the ascension of Jesus: "having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear" (v. 33). The pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost confirms that Jesus ascended to the right hand of God and received his kingdom. The crowd witnessed the evidence of the coming of the Spirit when the disciples spoke in tongues (v. 33).

Peter again turns to Scripture to support the expectation that the Messiah would ascend to heaven to reign at God's right hand. He quotes Ps. 110:1 from the LXX: "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'" The connective γὰρ in the introductory formula (v. 34) shows that the Scripture he quotes provides biblical support of his claim that Jesus was "exalted to the right hand of God" (v. 33).

Unlike his quotation of Ps. 16, Peter does not provide a detailed explanation of this passage. However, the introductory formula suggests that the same logic that shows that Psalm 16 refers to the resurrection of the Messiah also shows that Ps. 110 refers to the Messiah's ascension to God's right hand: "For David did not ascend into heaven, but he himself says" (v. 34). Even though David did not ascend to heaven himself, he speaks about someone who *will* ascend to heaven and reign from God's right hand, triumphant over all his enemies. This language reflects a typological interpretation of the psalm.

Peter concludes that Jesus' enthronement to God's right hand, at the position of authority over all creation, provides certain proof (ἀσφαλῶς γινωσκέτω)<sup>14</sup> that Jesus is "both Lord and Christ" (i.e. the Messiah, v. 36). This is probably a conclusion to the whole sermon, not merely the quotation of Ps. 110:1.<sup>15</sup> The messiahship of Jesus is shown by his resurrection and ascension and the Lordship of Jesus is shown by his ascension, since Jesus' fulfilled the actions that Scripture predicted the Messiah would do. Jesus' resurrection and ascension did not make him Lord and Messiah, but Peter calls his hearers to recognize (γινωσκέτω) that God has made Jesus both Lord and Messiah in light of the fact that he did the things expected of someone who fulfilled these roles. The claim which the Sanhedrin had rejected as blasphemous and for which they had condemned Jesus to death (2:23; cf. Mark 14:61), has been affirmed to be true by God himself.

Ps. 110 is a royal psalm with idealized language about the Israelite king descended from David. The king rules with the authority of God himself as God's vice-regent on earth.<sup>16</sup> The image of the king is too large to be fulfilled by any human Israelite king: He sits at God's right hand in a position of great authority, power and honor (v. 1). He has conquered all opposing nations (v. 1) and he rules and judges all the nations from Zion (vv. 2, 5-6). He is not only a great king but also a priest (v. 4). His reign is eternal (v. 4). The psalm refers to a king who

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<sup>14</sup> When ἀσφαλῶς ("certainly", "assuredly") modifies γινωσκέτω the combination means "know without a doubt (cf. Wis. 18:6). BDAG, "Asfalw".

<sup>15</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, "The Acts of the Apostles," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary Vol. 9*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Zondervan, 1981), 280.

<sup>16</sup> David M. Hay, *Glory At the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), 20. The Israelite king was placed on the throne by God and was to rule for the Lord (cf. 1 Chr. 17:14; 28:5; 29:23; 2 Chr. 9:8; 13:8).

would be greater than any normal king in authority, righteousness, divine blessing, and the universal scope of his kingdom.

These grand characteristics point to a messianic interpretation, rooted in the concept of corporate solidarity. The hopes and expectations of the Davidic kings were fulfilled typologically in the Messiah. Although the enigmatic references to the psalmist's "Lord" prompted numerous Jewish interpretations,<sup>17</sup> the psalm was interpreted messianically in many branches of Judaism. David Hay has shown that the messianic interpretation of the psalm was firmly entrenched in rabbinic literature of the third century.<sup>18</sup> The fact that this interpretation is so well attested in Rabbinic literature despite the Christian claim that the psalm points to Jesus' messiahship and deity suggests that this was a well established traditional view by this time. In addition during the pre-Christian era, the Hasmonean rulers used the concept of the Melchizedek priesthood described in this psalm to support their role as priest-kings with messianic overtones.<sup>19</sup> There may also be allusions to the psalm in the Similitudes of Enoch, although it is unknown whether this work is pre-Christian.<sup>20</sup> Thus although it is not proven that Ps. 110 was interpreted in a messianic way prior to the NT, there is a high likelihood that it was in some Jewish circles.

Mark 12:35-37 also suggests the existence of a messianic understanding of Ps. 110 in the first century, since Jesus says that the scribes claim that the Messiah would be the son of David. Jesus quotes Ps. 110:1 and asks how David can address this person as "Lord" if he is also a son of David. Jesus affirms the popular conception that the Messiah would be a son of David and then builds on the "two Lords" language in this passage to establish the deity of the Messiah, and therefore his own deity.<sup>21</sup>

It is likely that Peter's interpretation of Ps. 110 stems from Jesus' own teachings.<sup>22</sup> The introductory formula reflects the same logic that Jesus used: The Messiah would be a son of David, yet David addresses his own descendant as "Lord." Jesus uses the Psalm to emphasize the superiority of David's descendant to David himself, so that "David himself calls him Lord" (Mark 12:37). Peter draws this same conclusion (οὐν) in v. 36: "God has made this Jesus . . . both Lord and Christ." Jesus' enthronement at God's right hand confirms his identity as Lord and Messiah.

### **Acts 3:12-26: Peter's Message After Healing a Lame Man**

After Peter and John healed a lame beggar in front of the temple (Acts 3:1-11), Peter uses the opportunity to preach an evangelistic message to the gathered crowd (Acts 3:12-26). The heart of this message is that the time of fulfillment of the biblical promises is here. The whole OT

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<sup>17</sup> Early rabbis associated it with David, Abraham and even Hezekiah (Longenecker, "Acts", 279).

<sup>18</sup> Hay, 20

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. The Israelite king was placed on the throne by God and was to rule for the Lord (cf. 1 Chr. 17:14; 28:5; 29:23; 2 Chr. 9:8; 13:8).

<sup>20</sup> 1 En. 45:1, 3; 51:3; 52:1-7; 55:4; 61:8; 69:27, 29. Cf. Ibid., 26.

<sup>21</sup> The "two Lords" exegesis depends on the LXX, which uses *kurio* to translate two Hebrew words for "Lord" – אֲדֹנָי and יְהוָה (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, , *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 260).

<sup>22</sup> Heb 1:13 also appears to draw on Jesus' interpretation of Ps. 110:1. It emphasizes the deity of Christ even more clearly than Acts 2:34.

predicted the events of the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ: God announced "by the mouth of all the prophets" the sufferings of Christ (v. 18) and his ascension to heaven until he returns and brings the "restoration of all things" (v. 21). "All the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days" (v. 24). This perspective is similar to Luke 24, where the resurrected Christ appears to two disciples on the road to Emmaus. There Jesus proved that it was necessary for "the Christ to suffer all these things and to enter into His glory" by showing all the things predicted about the Messiah "beginning with Moses and with all the prophets" (Luke 24:26-27, cf. 46-47, in another resurrection appearance). Since God has validated that Jesus is the Christ as predicted in the Scriptures, Peter urges his Jewish audience to repent so their sins may be wiped away (v. 19), including the sin of rejecting and crucifying God's Messiah, which they did in ignorance (vv. 15-16).

The reference to Samuel as a prophet who announced the days of the Messiah (v. 24) may at first appear puzzling, since there is no known messianic prophecy by Samuel. Yet if "Samuel" is a metonymy for the books of Samuel, then Peter may be alluding to 2 Sam. 7:11-16., where Nathan prophesies that David's descendent would reign over his kingdom forever (cf. 13:34). Further, Samuel is the prophet who anointed David as king and often spoke of the establishment of his kingdom (1 Sam. 13:14; 15:28; 16:13; 28:17). Thus the reference to the prophet Samuel alludes to the prophecies of the one who will reign forever as David's greater son.

### **Acts 3:13, 26: The Perfect Servant of God**

V. 13 is the first Christological statement in this sermon: "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus." The phrase "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" echoes Ex. 3:6, 15 and affirms that the God that Peter is proclaiming is the same God that appeared to Moses at the burning bush (cf. Mark 12:26, where Jesus cites this verse). "His Servant" (τὸν παῖδα αὐτοῦ) is an allusion to Isa. 52:13: "Behold, My servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted."<sup>23</sup> The sense of παῖδα as "servant" rather than the more frequent meaning of "child" is due to the influence of the LXX which translates עֶבֶד ("servant", "slave") with παῖς ("child", "servant") in Isa. 52:13 and other Isaiah Servant passages (cf. Isa. 42:1; 49:6; 50:10).

The last verse of Peter's sermon (v. 26) also refers to the Servant: "God raised up his Servant." This creates a structural inclusion around the passage, showing that the theme of Jesus as the Servant of God is presupposed in the whole sermon. Isa. 52:13 prophesied that God's Servant "will be glorified" (δοξασθήσεται) and in Acts 3:13 Peter says that God "has glorified" (ἐδόξασεν) his Servant, using the aorist tense of the same verb. "Glorify" (δοξάζω) means that Jesus has been exalted to God's presence to share in His glory, as the word is regularly used in the NT (John 7:39; 12:16; 1 Tim 3:16; Rom. 8:30; Luke 24:26).<sup>24</sup> The tense shift from future (Isa. 52:13) to aorist (Acts 3:13) indicates that the messianic Servant Songs of Isaiah have been fulfilled, in particular Isa. 52:13-53:12. This fourth Servant Song is one of the most frequently cited OT passages in the NT concerning the mission of the Messiah.<sup>25</sup> It describes the atoning

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel and Donald H. Juel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 14; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 285; John B. Polhill, *New American Commentary, Acts*, no. 26 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2001), 131.

<sup>24</sup> Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 285.

<sup>25</sup> The passage is quoted in Matt 8:17 (Isa. 53:4); Luke 22:37 (Isa. 53:12); Acts 8:32-33 (Isa. 53:7); Rom. 10:16 (Isa. 53:1); 15:21 (Isa. 52:15) 1 Pet. 2:22 (Isa. 53:9).

suffering and death of the Messiah (52:15; 53:4-6) and suggests his resurrection (v. 10) – themes Peter emphasized in Acts 3 (his suffering and death: vv. 15, 18; his resurrection: v. 15, possibly v. 26).<sup>26</sup>

God's "Servant" in Isaiah has a dual meaning.<sup>27</sup> Sometimes it refers to Israel as a whole (e.g. 41:8-9, "Israel my servant"; 44:1-2, "Jacob my servant"; 44:21; 45:4) and sometimes it refers to a righteous and obedient individual that is part of Israel, but distinguished from the rest of the nation (e.g. Isaiah [20:3]; Eliakim, a priest [22:20]; David, with possible messianic overtones [37:35]). The special unnamed Servant of God is an individual on whom God would place his Spirit (42:1), whom God wants Israel to obey (49:5-6; 50:10), and whose role is to bring Israel back to God and to be a light to the nations, so that God's salvation will reach the ends of the earth (42:6; 49:5-6).<sup>28</sup> The reference to the Servant as a "tender shoot" and "root" in Isa. 53:2 may echo the future Davidic king that would come from the root of Jesse (Isa. 11:1, 10) and that grew from the stump of the tree that was cut down (Isa. 6:13).<sup>29</sup> The individual meaning extends throughout Isa. 49-53, which suggests that the messianic interpretation of the suffering, but exalted Servant in Isa. 52:13-53:12 fits the OT context.<sup>30</sup>

Although Jewish interpretations of the passage vary, many diverse Jewish writings interpret this and other Isaiah Servant Songs messianically, including some that are pre-Christian or from the first century A.D.<sup>31</sup> Non-messianic interpretations of this passage are more common in Jewish writings after the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. as an apologetic against Christianity, although even then many Jewish interpreters understand the passage messianically. After studying various pre-Christian Jewish references to Isaiah 53, Martin Hengel concludes:

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<sup>26</sup> Other messianic uses of *pa'i* in Luke-Acts include Acts 4:25 ("David your servant"), 4:27, 30 ("your holy servant Jesus"); 1:69 (Zecharias prophesied at Jesus dedication, "God has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David his servant"). Also significant is Luke 1:43 (the Magnificat of Mary), which shows that *pa'i* can refer to Israel in Luke, although this is still a messianic context since it predicts Israel will be helped by the Messiah ("He has given help to Israel his servant").

<sup>27</sup> For a summary of recent discussion of the identity of the Servant in Isa. 52:13-53:12, see Murray Rae, "Texts in Context: Scripture in the Divine Economy," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 1, no. 1 (2007): 1-21.

<sup>28</sup> The ambiguity between the Servant as the people of Israel and an individual could be explained by corporate solidarity, where the king could represent Israel. Cf. Peter Gentry, "The Atonement in Isaiah's Fourth Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 11, no. 2 (2007): 23.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>30</sup> Daniel I. Block, "My Servant David: Ancient Israel's Vision of the Messiah," in , ed. Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 17-56, shows that the Servant in Isaiah is a Davidic king.

<sup>31</sup> Sir. 48:10 (echoes Isa. 49:6); 1 En. 48:4 (the messianic Son of Man is a "light to the gentiles", echoing Isa. 42:6; 49:6); 62:1-9 (echoes Isa. 52:13-15). For other messianic allusions to Isa. 52:13-53:12 in 1 En. 37-71, see Jeremias, "Pai" Qeou", TDNT 5:687-688. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> interprets the passage messianically (Martin Hengel and Daniel P. Bailey, "The Effective History of Isaiah 53 in the Pre-Christian Period", in *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources*, ed. Bernd Janowski, Peter Stuhlmacker, trans. Daniel P Bailey (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 75) as do Aquila's Greek translation (ca A.D. 100) and the Peshitta. Hengel argues that the Isaiah pesharim A-D in 4Q161-165 interpret the passage as a reference to the last days, in which the Qumran community members considered themselves to be living (*Ibid.*, 84.). Gentry, "Atonement", 24 believes that the LXX translation of *pa'i* ("tender shoot") by *paidion* in Isa. 53:2 reflects a early Jewish belief that the Servant is the "child" in Isa. 9:5 LXX. Although Tg. Is. 52:13-53:12 (v. 13, "my servant, the Messiah") in its present form comes from 5<sup>th</sup> Century A.D., the text form may go back to the pre-Christian period. Rabbinic passages include bSanh. 98a (ca A.D. 200) and Midr. Samuel 19. For an extensive discussion, see Hengel and Bailey, "Suffering Servant", 75-146; Jeremias, "Pai" Qeou", TDNT 5:686-700; cf. Strack and Billerbeck, 1:481-483.

. . . the demonstrated uses and echoes of this text are enough to suggest that traditions of suffering and atoning eschatological messianic figures were current in Palestinian Judaism, and that Jesus and the earliest Church *could* have known and appealed to them. This would explain how first Jesus and then his disciples could assume that their message of the Messiah's vicarious atoning death would be comprehensible to their Jewish contemporaries.<sup>32</sup>

### Acts 3:22-23: A Prophet Like Moses

Although Peter frequently states in this sermon that the Scriptures widely describe the coming Messiah, he only directly quotes Scripture twice (vv. 22-23, 25).<sup>33</sup>

Peter's first biblical quotation is in vv. 22-23: "Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you. And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.'" Verse 22 is a quotation of Deut 18:15-16a, slightly revised from the LXX.<sup>34</sup> Verse 23 is a conflation of Deut. 18:19 and Lev. 23:29. Peter changed "I will require it of him" (Deut 18:19) to "he will be completely cut off from among his people" (Lev 23:29).

In Deut. 18:15-16, Moses makes a direct prediction that God will raise up a prophet like him. Peter sees this as a messianic prediction about Jesus. Although some Jewish interpreters saw this as a prediction of the rise of the prophets, in other Jewish circles this passage was understood as a messianic prediction. Rabbinic literature says that "as the first redeemer, so the last redeemer"<sup>35</sup> and Jewish writings of the NT era attest to a belief in Moses typology (cf. John 6:14).<sup>36</sup> Qumran writings frequently compare Moses and the Messiah (CD 1:11; 20:28) and look forward to an eschatological prophet like Moses (1QS 9:10-11), citing Deuteronomy 18 to support that expectation (4QTest 5-7).<sup>37</sup>

Although Deut. 18:15-19 is a predictive prophecy, it includes the basis for a typological understanding of the relationship between Moses and the Messiah. "Like me" (ὡς ἐμε, LXX) suggests a pattern which is replicated, which is the basic principle of typology. This shows that typology is based on OT teaching and is not an interpretive method fabricated by the Apostles.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>33</sup> Peter may have included more biblical citations or allusions. Luke acknowledges that he abbreviated some sermons (2:40). The frequent references to the comprehensive biblical witness to Jesus (3:18, 21, 24) suggest that he may have included more in the actual sermon.

<sup>34</sup> Most of the words are the same, but the word order is different. Singular second pronouns are used instead of the plural pronouns in the LXX. "Everything he says to you" (v. 22) could be a paraphrase of Deut. 18:18.

<sup>35</sup> Qoh. r. 1.28. Cf. Jeremias, "Mwush~", TDNT, 4:860-861 for numerous aspects of the comparison between Moses and the Messiah in Rabbinic literature.

<sup>36</sup> The reference in John 6:14 to "the Prophet who was to come into the world" is probably messianic, in light of the crowd's desire to make Jesus king and the popular expectation that the Messiah would repeat the miracle of the manna, which Jesus alludes to in the feeding of the 5000 and the bread of life discourse (Jeremias, "Mwush~", TDNT, 4:858-859, 862). John 1:21, 25 and 7:40 refer to the debate among the crowds about whether John the Baptist or Jesus were the eschatological prophet. However, these appear to contrast the eschatological prophet with the Messiah, presumably as a forerunner to the Messiah (cf. John 1:20; 7:41).

<sup>37</sup> For various references, cf. Jeremias, "Mwush~", TDNT, 4:858, n. 126 (Samaritan messianic expectation), 861 (Damascus document), 862 (Josephus refers to various Messianic claimants, who patterned their intended deliverance after Moses).

Peter compares Jesus to Moses, not as lawgiver, but in two major aspects:

(1) *He speaks authoritatively for God.* As Moses spoke from God with authority, Jesus also has divine authority. Hence, Peter's Jewish audience must obey Jesus or face God's wrath (v. 23; cf. Deut. 18:18-19).

(2) *He redeems the people of God.* As Moses brought Israel out of Egypt, so Jesus redeems his people in several senses: (a) physical healing, as the lame man demonstrates (v. 16); (b) wiping away their sins (v. 19); and (c) the "restoration of all things" when he comes again, i.e. the redemption of all creation (v. 21). The concept of redemption is reinforced by the language of Lev. 23:29 in the curse of v. 23 ("will be cut off from the people", ἐξολεθρευθήσεται ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ). Since Leviticus 23 describes the day of atonement, this is a typological allusion to the atoning work of Christ (cf. v. 18, "God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer"). This comparison is especially significant in light of the fact that some Jewish writings saw the second Moses as a suffering figure like the first Moses and some even saw atoning value in Moses' death and burial in the wilderness.<sup>38</sup>

Thus Peter implicitly tells his Jewish audience that to be faithful to Moses, they must repent and believe in Jesus, since Moses himself pointed to the Messiah Jesus. The consequences of rejecting God's Messiah are as severe as violating the Law of Moses by failing to participate in the day of atonement: it results in being cut off from God's people (Lev. 23:29, cited in v. 23). Moses himself predicted the dire consequences of rejecting this eschatological prophet in Deut. 18:15-19. Hence the Old Covenant contained a built-in seed of its own obsolescence, when Moses said that the Jewish people were to obey the future "prophet like me," who would replace him.

### Acts 3:25: The Seed of Abraham

Peter says that the Jewish people are not only the beneficiaries of the prophetic promises, but also part of the covenant made with Abraham. In v. 25, Peter quotes the promise in the covenant made with Abraham in Gen 22:18 and 26:4, which were reaffirmations of the original promise in Gen 12:3: "In your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed." The text of the quotation is almost identical to the LXX of 22:18 and 26:4, except that the verb "shall be blessed" (ἐνευλογηθῶσονται) is moved from the start to the middle of the clause and ἔθνη ("nations") is replaced with πατριαί ("families", "peoples" or "nations"). The meaning is not substantially affected by the changes. If Peter has in mind Gen. 12:3, πατριαί is a more accurate translation of the Hebrew *הַבְּרִיחַ* ("families", "clans") than φυλαί ("tribes"), the word used in the LXX.<sup>39</sup>

On one level, since the Jews are "sons of the covenant" (v. 24), they can reasonably expect to experience the blessing that the covenant provided. Yet in v. 26, Peter interprets "seed" (τῷ σπέρματι) as Christ, rather than the whole Jewish race: "God raised up his Servant and sent him to bless you by turning every one of your from your wicked ways." God will bless all the peoples of the earth through him, starting with the Jews first (Acts 3:26, "you first"; cf. Rom. 1:16; 2:10). Peter's argument depends on a corporate solidarity understanding of the promise made to Abraham. The blessing for the entire world comes when Israel is obedient to God. Yet

<sup>38</sup> In Rabbinic literature, the comparison of the suffering of Moses and the Messiah is as early as R. Aqiba (AD 50-132). Jeremiah, "Mwush", TDNT, 4:863.

<sup>39</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles. The Greek Text With Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans, 1951), 114.

only the Messiah – the descendant of Abraham, God’s obedient Servant (v. 26) – is the perfect representative of the people of God and obeys God completely, thus bringing God’s blessing to all the peoples of the earth. Paul uses the same interpretation of “seed” in Gal. 3, where he sees the singular seed as a reference to Christ (Gal. 3:16). Yet at the same time those who are “in Christ” are Abraham’s seed and experience the blessings of the covenant with Abraham (Gal. 3:26-29).<sup>40</sup>

In Jewish interpretation, Abraham’s seed is frequently understood as a collective reference to the Jewish people. However, in a number of instances, the blessing is expected to come through an individual descendant of Abraham, often Isaac or Jacob (e.g. Jub. 16:17-18; Ps. Philo *L.A.B.* 8:3), but sometimes preeminently through the Messiah.<sup>41</sup>

Peter says that the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant is not automatically given to Abraham's physical descendants. He urges his Jewish audience to repent, so they may experience the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant which are brought by God’s Servant, the Messiah (vv. 19, 25; cf. Gal 3:7, “those who are of faith are sons of Abraham”, 9).

### **Acts 4:8-12: Peter’s Defense Before the Sanhedrin**

The healing of the lame man and Peter's powerful proclamation drew the attention of the Jewish religious leaders, who jailed Peter and John and called them before the Sanhedrin to account for their actions. Peter turns this message of defense into an evangelistic message about the uniqueness of Jesus as the way of salvation. The rulers ask them by what power or in what name they have healed this man and taught these things (v. 7). Through the power of the Holy Spirit (v. 8), Peter replies that this was done in the name of Jesus the Messiah, the one who is the most important person of all – the very cornerstone of the building (v. 11), the one alone in whom we must trust to be saved (v. 12).

### **Acts 4:11: The Rejected Stone Becomes the Cornerstone**

Peter presents the Gospel to the Sanhedrin by quoting Ps. 118:22: “He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief cornerstone.” This OT citation metaphorically alludes to the suffering of Christ, his rejection by Israel, his exaltation by God, and his essential role in salvation. Since the rejection of the Messiah was anticipated in Scripture, ironically the rejection of Jesus by Israel’s leaders is evidence that he is the Messiah appointed by God. God vindicated Jesus by raising him from the dead (v. 10). Since Jesus is the rejected stone that became the most important stone in the building, the logical conclusion is that “there is no other name under heaven . . . by which we must be saved” (v. 12).

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<sup>40</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, , *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary, no. 41, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Word Books: Dallas, 1990), 132. Dan. 7 has a similar dual meaning of based on corporate solidarity, where the “one like a Son of Man” is an individual in v. 14, but is interpreted as the “saints of the Most High” in v. 21.

<sup>41</sup> Max Wilcox, “The Promise of the ‘Seed’ in the NT and the Targumim,” *JSNT* 5 (1979): 2-20, shows that the Targumim sometimes interpret the seed of Abraham in an individual sense, originally designating Isaac, but sometimes expecting the fulfillment in the Messiah. In Jub. 16:17-18 the seed is probably Jacob. In Ps. Philo, *L.A.B.* 8:3, the “eternal seed” could refer to Isaac or possibly a later messianic figure (Wilcox, 15). For other examples of Rabbinic interpretation of “seed” as singular, see David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (Ayer: London, 1956), 438-44.

Jesus quotes Ps. 118:22 as part of his explanation of the parable of the Wicked Tenants (Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17).<sup>42</sup> This parable describes the rejection of Christ by the Jewish leaders. Both Peter's sermon and Jesus' interpretation of the Wicked Tenants agree that the stone is Jesus and the rejection of the stone refers to Jesus' crucifixion and the unbelief of Israel's leaders. Certainly some details are different due to the context of the parable in the Synoptic Gospels, which includes judgment on Israel.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless the basic formula is shared by both interpretations: Jesus is the rejected stone that became indispensable. Thus Peter's interpretation of Ps. 118:22 may well originate with Jesus' own interpretation of the passage.

Acts 4:11 apparently uses an original translation of 1 Pet 2:7 except for the final phrase, εἰς κεφαλᾶν γωνίας ("chief cornerstone"), which is like the LXX.<sup>44</sup> As a preacher aiming to convict his hearers so they will repent, Peter changed the wording of the quotation to a direct second person accusation against the Jewish leaders: "You, the builders" have rejected the stone. This interpretive paraphrase applies the text to the present situation and stresses his hearers' accountability for rejecting Christ.

The basic metaphor is clear. A stone which was rejected by builders as unsuitable to use in a building becomes the most important stone in the structure. It is debated whether κεφαλῆν γωνίας refers to the cornerstone of a building or the capstone of an arch, possibly in the temple.<sup>45</sup> However, the exact reference does not affect the metaphor – either way the stone becomes the most important stone in the building, the one that holds the whole structure together. In the introductory formula to the quotation, οὗτός ἐστιν is best translated "he is" rather than "this is," since it identifies Jesus as the stone.<sup>46</sup>

In its original context, Ps. 118 is a liturgical song of thanksgiving celebrating a great victory of Israel in a battle with her enemies. Suggestions about the historical victory commemorated include (1) the victory of a Davidic king over a confederacy of nations (cf. 2 Chr. 20:27-28), (2) Israel's deliverance from Egypt and victory over the Canaanites celebrated at the Feast of Tabernacles, and (3) the victory of the post-exilic Jews at the dedication of the second temple (Ezra 6:16) or the rebuilt walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 12:37-43).<sup>47</sup> Regardless of the historical setting, the stone in Ps. 118:22 refers to Israel, which God has made victorious.<sup>48</sup> Although there

<sup>42</sup> It is also cited in 1 Pet 2:7 in a catena of OT citations showing that Jesus is the stone rejected by men but precious to God.

<sup>43</sup> E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Baker, 1957), 206.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. W. K. L. Clarke, "The Use of the Septuagint in Acts," in *The Beginnings of Christianity*, ed. F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake (London: Macmillan, 1922), 2:97. The Gospels (Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17) and 1 Pet 2:7 quote the LXX version exactly.

<sup>45</sup> Jeremias argues that κεφαλῆν γωνία is the keystone placed over the entrance to the temple (J. Jeremias, "Der Eckstein," *Angelos* 1(1925):65-70). However, since the earliest evidence of this usage is 2nd century (Test. Sol. 22:7; Peshitta Ps. 118:22), others argue that it should be seen in the literal sense of "chief cornerstone" (W. Mundle, "Gwnia" NIDNTT 3:389-390; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 33). Mitchell Dahood, , *Psalms I: 101-150*, The Anchor Bible Commentary (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 159, argues that since the Hebrew puts אֶבֶן ("stone") at the beginning and רִיבּוּן ("corner") at the end, it breaks up a composite phrase meaning "cornerstone", which is found in Jer. 51:26 and Job 38:6.

<sup>46</sup> Contra Ellis, *Prophecy*, 207, οὗτός ἐστιν is not Midrashic "this is that" language, but the identification of Jesus as the rejected but exalted stone.

<sup>47</sup> See several interpretations in Hans Joachim Kraus, , *Psalms 60-150*, Continental Commentaries (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 395-96.

<sup>48</sup> Dahood, *Psalms 101-150*, 159.

is a single speaker in much of the psalm (either a Davidic king or a priest), he is leading the congregation in liturgical thanksgiving.<sup>49</sup>

In what sense is it legitimate to relate this verse to Jesus? It clearly is not a predictive prophecy with a direct reference to the Messiah. It is not a typology where the king points to Christ, since even if the Davidic king is leading the liturgy, Israel is exalted, not just the king. At one level, the stone imagery is a proverb (בִּשְׂפָן)<sup>50</sup> that describes a principle about how God deals with his people. God exalts the rejected, even as Jesus said "the last shall be first" (Mark 10:31; cf. Matt. 20:26). This principle is true *par excellence* with Jesus, who was rejected by men (cf. Isa. 53:3), but vindicated by God.

But Peter's interpretation is even more profound than this. Using the principle of corporate solidarity, what is true of Israel is even more true of the Messiah as the perfect representative of Israel. For Israel, the concept described in Ps. 118 was idealized.<sup>51</sup> They did not become the most important nation of the ancient world, even though they experienced marvelous victories against their enemies. This suggests that there was a deeper fulfillment yet to come that Israel's experience only pointed to. This is similar to the application of Isaiah's Servant Songs both to Israel and to the Messiah. Israel never fully achieved the role God intended, but the Messiah, God's obedient Servant, fulfills this role perfectly.

The "rejected stone" was often interpreted in Judaism as a reference to the Messiah.<sup>52</sup> Dan. 2:34-35 also uses a stone as a symbol for the Messiah. Thus Peter's messianic interpretation of the psalm would have been readily understandable to his Jewish audience.

## **How Peter Uses Scripture in His Evangelistic Sermons**

### **Christology Is Drawn from the Old Testament**

Peter finds a rich Christology in the biblical passages he uses in these evangelistic messages. "All the prophets" predicted the events of the last days, which Peter says have arrived (3:18, 21, 24; cf. 2:17-21). The prophets predicted the events of Christ's life, including his suffering and death (3:18), his resurrection (2:24-31 (=Ps. 16:8-11)), his ascension to heaven to be enthroned at God's right hand (2:34-35 (=Ps. 110:1); 3:21), his Second Coming for the "restoration of all things" (3:21), and his rejection by most of Israel (3:18; 4:11 (=Ps. 118:22)). Jesus' identity as Lord and Christ is confirmed since he fulfilled these scriptural expectations of the Messiah (2:36).

Fundamentally Peter uses Scripture to show that Jesus is the Messiah and to urge his hearers to have faith in him for salvation. His Christological citations serve an evangelistic purpose: In light of the fact that Jesus is Messiah and Lord, and since God has validated his identity through his resurrection, his ascension and the fulfillment of Scripture, we should repent from our sins

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<sup>49</sup> Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 401.

<sup>50</sup> A. A. Anderson, , *The Book of Psalms: Psalms 73-150*, New Century Bible Commentary, ed. Ronald E. Clements and Matthew Black (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans, 1972), 797; Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 400.

<sup>51</sup> R. Press, "Der Gottesknecht Im Alten Testament," *ZAW* 67 (1955): 90, argues that hope has shot ahead of reality and the final fulfillment is in the new Jerusalem. He probably goes too far, since he ignores the cultic points of reference (vv. 19-21). Yet he correctly observes that "the words of the petitioner transcend the actual cultic relations; they strive beyond them toward what is ultimate" (Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 396).

<sup>52</sup> Gen.. R 68:11; Exod. R. 29; Tg. Ps.-J. Exod. 39:7. Longenecker, "Acts", 304. Tg. Ps. 118:22 has a messianic interpretation (Bertil Gärtner, "The Habakkuk Commentary (DSH) and the Gospel of Matthew," *ST* 8 (1955): 23-24).

and believe in Jesus (2:36; 3:19; 4:12; cf. 2:21). Although Jesus was rejected by many of his own people, God foreknew this would happen and Jesus is the one that God appointed as the only way of salvation (4:11-12 (=Ps. 118:22)). This offer of salvation through Jesus is available to all who call on the Lord, not just Jews (3:25 (=Gen 22:18; 26:4); cf. 2:21 (=Joel 2:32); 2:39).

There is a continuity between the Christian faith and the OT. The gospel is not about a new God, but "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," who made these promises that Jesus fulfilled (3:13). Jesus is the promised Prophet like Moses, whom we must obey because he speaks authoritatively for God and brings redemption to his people (3:22-23 (=Deut. 18:15-19; Lev. 23:29)). He is the promised descendant of Abraham, who fulfills the Abrahamic covenant to bless all the peoples of the earth (3:25(=Gen 12:3; 22:18; 26:4)). He is the descendant of David, who perfectly fulfills all that the ideal Davidic king was to be (2:25-28 (=Ps. 16:8-11); 2:30 (=Ps. 132:11; 2 Sam. 7:11-16); 2:34-35 (=Ps. 110:1)). He is the perfectly obedient Servant of God who fulfills all that Israel was to have done (3:13, 26 (=Isa. 52:13-53:12)). He is the exalted Lord sitting at God's right hand, whom even David honored as his Lord (2:34-36 (=Ps. 110:1)).

### Methods of Interpreting Scripture

Peter uses several sophisticated techniques to interpret Scripture and to support his Christological teachings about Jesus from Scripture:

1. **Assumption that he is living in the days of fulfillment:** This is explicitly stated several times (Acts 3:18, 21, 24; cf. 2:16) and assumed throughout Peter's sermons (e.g. Acts 2:32-33, 36; 3:13).
2. **Direct predictive prophecy:** God will place one of David's descendants on his throne forever (Acts 2:30 (=Ps. 132:11, 2 Sam. 7:11-16)). God will send a prophet like Moses (Acts 3:22-23 (=Deut. 18:15-19)). Through Abraham's offspring, all the peoples of the world will be blessed (Acts 3:25 (=Gen 22:18; 26:4)). The reference to the Servant that God has glorified (Acts 3:13, 26 alluding to Isa. 52:13) and the claim that "all the prophets announced these days" (Acts 3:24, cf. 18, 21) suggest the fulfillment of direct predictions, although the interpretation of some passages uses other methods.
3. **Scripture interprets Scripture:** Insights about the Davidic covenant from 2 Sam. 7:11-16 (Acts 2:30) give insight into who is referred to in Ps. 16:8-11 (Acts 2:31).
4. **Logic:** Since David died and did not ascend to heaven, Ps. 16:8-11 and 110:1 must refer to someone else, in this case to David's greater descendent, the Messiah (Acts 2:29, 34).
5. **Typology:** The Messiah will be a prophet patterned after Moses (Acts 3:22-23 (=Deut. 18:15-19)). David did not rise from the dead (Acts 2:25-28 (=Ps. 16:8-11)) or ascend to heaven to sit at God's right hand (Acts 2:34-35 (=Ps. 110:1)), but his greater descendant did.
6. **Corporate solidarity:** Many characteristics attributed to Davidic kings are too big for any normal human king to fulfill, but will be fulfilled by the Messiah, the ideal king: He was to rise from the dead (Acts 2:25-28 (=Ps. 16:8-11)) and reign at God's right hand (Acts 2:34-35 (=Ps. 110:1)). The promise to bless the world through Abraham's

offspring (Gen. 22:18; 26:4) applies to the Jewish people, but even more to the perfectly obedient descendent of Abraham, who is the representative of the people of God (Acts 3:25). As Israel was the rejected stone that became the cornerstone (Ps. 118:22), so even more is the Messiah (Acts 4:11).

7. **Application of a principle:** The rejected stone which becomes the cornerstone (Ps 118:22) is a proverb about how God deals with his people and is thus applicable to the Messiah as the perfect representative of God's people (Acts 4:11).
8. **Some interpretations are based on Jesus' interpretation:** Acts 2:34-35 draws upon Jesus' interpretation of Ps. 110:1 (Mark 12:35-37). Peter's interpretation of Ps. 118:22 (Acts 4:11) assumes Jesus' interpretation of the rejected stone that became the cornerstone in the parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mark 12:10-11).

### Methods of Citing Scripture

There are several ways that Peter incorporates Scripture into his sermons:

1. **Direct quotation:** Peter frequently quotes the LXX with no or only minor changes. At times the text is an original translation from the Hebrew or an otherwise unknown early Greek version (Acts 4:11).
2. **Conflation of texts:** Acts 3:23 weaves together a quotation of Deut. 18:19 with Lev. 23:29.
3. **Allusion to Scripture using biblical language:** Peter's use of  $\pi\alpha\iota\varsigma$  to refer to the servant whom God glorified and raised up (Acts 3:13, 26) echoes the LXX of Isa. 52:13 and brings to mind the Servant Songs of Isaiah, particularly Isa. 52:13-53:12. The reference to Samuel prophesying about David (Acts 3:24) alludes to Nathan's prophecy of the Davidic covenant in 2 Sam. 7:11-16. The conflation of Lev. 23:29 with Deut. 18:19 suggests a typological allusion to the atoning work of Christ (Acts 3:23).
4. **Interpretive paraphrase:** Peter changes Ps. 118:22 to use second person pronouns to emphasize the responsibility of his hearers for rejecting the Messiah (Acts 4:11). He changes the tense from future (Isa. 52:13) to aorist (Acts 3:13) to indicate that the Messiah has been glorified and the Servant Songs of Isaiah have been fulfilled in Christ (particularly Isa. 52:13-53:12).

### Conclusions

In the evangelistic messages of Acts 2, 3 and 4, Peter makes a rich use of the OT to support his Christology about Jesus. His Christological use of scriptural citations was an important part of his proof of Jesus' identity and serves as the basis of his evangelistic appeal to his Jewish audience. The passages show that Jesus is the promised Messiah and the time of fulfillment of the prophetic promises has come.

Although not all of the cited texts use direct predictive prophecy, his assumptions about typology and corporate solidarity were widely accepted within early Judaism and make sense in

this cultural context. There is good evidence that at least some groups within Judaism interpreted these passages similarly. Of course, his conclusion that Jesus is the one who fulfills these prophecies is a distinctively Christian belief. Yet Peter's use of Scripture to support his claims proved effective in bringing many Jewish people to faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Lord.